

# 2023 Vermont's Annual **POINT-IN-TIME COUNT**

of Those Experiencing  
Homelessness



*Presented by the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance  
and the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness*



# VERMONT’S ANNUAL STATEWIDE COUNT OF THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS 2023

## CONTENTS

Contents.....	1
Summary.....	2
Notable Findings 2023 .....	3
What The PIT Count Does and Does Not Tell Us.....	4
Chart A: Vermont Point-in-Time Count of those experiencing Homelessness: 2014-2023.....	6
Chart B: Location of Persons Experiencing Homelessness.....	7
Chart C: Location of Persons Experiencing Homelessness, Sheltered and Unsheltered.....	8
Chart D: Persons Experiencing Homelessness by Household Type.....	9
Chart E: 2022 Population Statewide by Race.....	10
Chart F: 2022 Chittenden County by Race .....	10
Chart G: Statewide Subpopulations of Persons Experiencing Homelessness .....	11
Contact Information.....	12

*Report Released June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023*

## SUMMARY

This report chronicles the landscape of and changes in homelessness in Vermont in 2023 and over a ten-year period with breakdowns by location of homelessness, household type, and subpopulation. The Annual Point in Time Count is a statewide count of persons experiencing literal homelessness<sup>1</sup> on January 25, 2023. The Count captures the most vulnerable population, those *literally homeless* and does not include those *at risk of homelessness, doubled up, or couch surfing*. Vermont's two Continua of Care (CoC) — the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness (Balance of State CoC) and Chittenden Homeless Alliance (Chittenden County CoC) — are the lead organizers of this effort. These CoCs, along with 11 Local Housing Coalitions that are part of the Balance of State, are comprised of service and housing providers, state agencies, those with lived experience of homelessness, and other key partners in the work to make all homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Many thanks to our colleagues at the Institute for Community Alliances who manage the collection and processing of data from the Point in Time Count.

The Point in Time Count in January 2023 found an 18.5% increase in persons experiencing homelessness in Vermont compared to the prior year (Chart A). This is an increase of 197% since the pre-pandemic Point in Time Count in 2020.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Vermont's response network was supported by comprehensive availability of non-congregate shelter in hotels and motels around the state, through the Emergency Housing Initiative, a Transitional Housing Program, and extended and expanded Adverse Weather Conditions policy hotel availability. Over a three-year time period the expanded hotel eligibility provided security and stability for many, allowing all households experiencing homelessness throughout the state to "stay home, stay safe." and also enabled a very accurate count of those experiencing sheltered homelessness in the State.

The Point in Time Count provides a valuable measure of Vermont's homeless population; the data is used to assess and identify housing service gaps and responses to these gaps. We encourage anyone with an interest in this report and Vermont's response to homelessness to contact one of the advocates and service and shelter providers listed on the last page.

*Note:* A supplemental report with county specific data will be issued at a later date.

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<sup>1</sup> Staying in emergency shelter, transitional housing for homeless persons, a place not meant for human habitation, or staying in motel paid for by General Assistance Emergency Housing.

## NOTABLE FINDINGS 2023:

- The count on the night of January 25, 2023, found 3,295 Vermonters experienced literal homelessness, an increase of 515 persons compared to the 2022 count (Chart A).
  - We believe that this increase is due, in part, to (1) the termination in the fall of 2022 of rent subsidies provided to lower income Vermonters through the Emergency Rental Assistant program, and the end of the eviction moratorium in July 2022, both resulting in increased housing instability; (2) the extremely low vacancy rate for apartments in much of Vermont, ranging from 0.5% to 3% across the state, allowing landlords to increase rents and to be highly selective in choosing tenants; and, (3) the operation of non-congregate emergency and transitional housing opportunities in hotels and motels, allowing for increased eligibility to emergency housing and creating a more accurate reflection of the community need.
  - The relatively smaller increase in persons experiencing homelessness in Chittenden County is likely due to the extremely tight market for hotel rooms in the county which required people to relocate to shelter in other counties.
- The number of persons experiencing homelessness and in a household with children increased by 36% compared to the prior year, compared to an 11% increase of people in households with adults only (Chart D). The increase in the number of children experiencing homelessness is heartbreaking. Homeless children often face inadequate access to nutritious food and proper healthcare; they may experience chronic stress, anxiety, and shame; they may be exposed to violence or substance abuse. Homeless children may face disruption in their education and isolation from friends and extended family. Lastly, children who experience homelessness are more likely to experience homelessness as adults.

We must break this cycle.

- Black & Indigenous Vermonters disproportionately experienced homelessness in 2023 compared to the general population in both Chittenden County and Statewide (Charts E and F). Vermont's Continua of Care recognize the urgency of understanding and responding to the causes of this disproportionate experience; causes including structural racism resulting in housing discrimination and economic inequality.

### Other Findings:

- One hundred thirty-seven people were counted as unsheltered, i.e., living outside or in a car (Charts B and C). This population is, by definition, difficult to count and is under-reported. Some people choose to not be included in the Point in Time Count, while others are hidden from sight, and many rural communities do not have the capacity to reach isolated communities.
- With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the State of Vermont – with the support of multiple community partners – began offering non-congregate shelter for people experiencing homelessness in hotels and motels. Rooms were paid for using State general

funds, FEMA funds, and subsequently federal Emergency Rental Assistance funding. With funding from the latter source, the Agency of Human Services created a temporary 9-month Transitional Housing program for the hotel residents which allowed for an agreement between hotel owners and residents. This results in a significant increase in the number of homeless people counted as being in “Transitional Housing” in 2023. This increase in count for those in Transitional Housing also results in an artificial decrease in the number of people recorded as experiencing chronic homelessness, due to the HUD definition of chronic homelessness being limited to NOT include those in the Transitional Housing. People who moved from Emergency Housing to Transitional Housing are no longer considered chronically homeless even though there is no actual change in their circumstances. (Charts B and G)

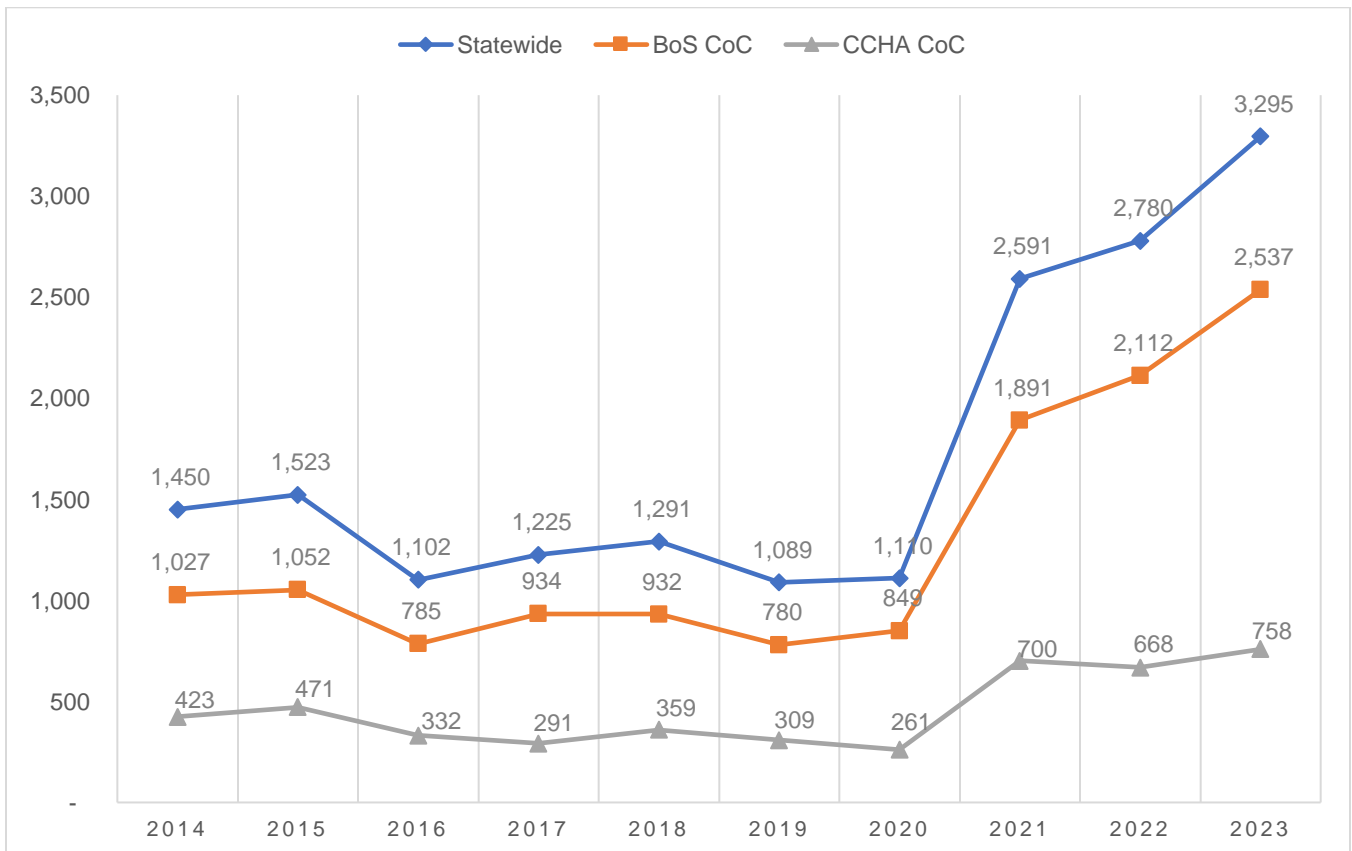
- Chart D, Subpopulations of Homelessness, paints a complex picture about who is experiencing homelessness. First, not all people experiencing homelessness have a reportable condition that helps to explain their experience; in many cases homelessness is caused by poverty (which may be a short-term setback) and lack of affordable housing. Second, the conditions reported in the chart are self-reporting and perhaps ill-defined and therefore the absolute numbers should be cited carefully. Thirdly, those in Transitional and Emergency Housing were not asked to self-report on Substance Use or Mental Health. Lastly, our response to homelessness requires a broad-based effort involving several state agencies, mental health providers, substance use disorder supports, and more .
  - The efforts of the Vermont Veterans Committee on Homelessness leading into 2020 resulted in an all-time low number of Veterans experiencing homelessness in Vermont, which then shifted to a 45% year-over-year increase in 2021 and a slight decrease in 2022. While the changes from 2020 to 2023 can largely, if not solely, be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic response, there was an added factor contributing to the increase. In August 2022, the definition of Veteran was expanded nationally across Veteran-serving programs to include a category of previously ineligible service members, those who served on Active Duty in the US Reserves. This expansion appears to have had an influence on the inflow of Veterans into the homeless response system as reflected in the 2023 PIT increase.

## **WHAT THE PIT COUNT DOES AND DOES NOT TELL US**

The PIT Count provides important information about the nature of unmet need in our community and shows trends over time. During the night of the PIT count we are able to gather a snapshot of insight into the demographics and characteristics of those who are unsheltered, living in emergency shelter, and accessing Vermont’s Agency of Human Services General Assistance Emergency Housing or Transitional Housing program. The PIT Count highlights the importance and impact of Emergency and Transitional Housing in hotels.

Due to its nature of only counting where someone slept on a given night, the PIT count does not reveal how many persons are entering and exiting homelessness in Vermont over the course of the year. The Count does not answer why people become homeless, how they leave homelessness when they do, or what barriers might be preventing them from returning to permanent housing. The Count cannot give explanations as to changes in rates of homelessness or different demographic groups, we must look to communities and people with lived experience for this information.

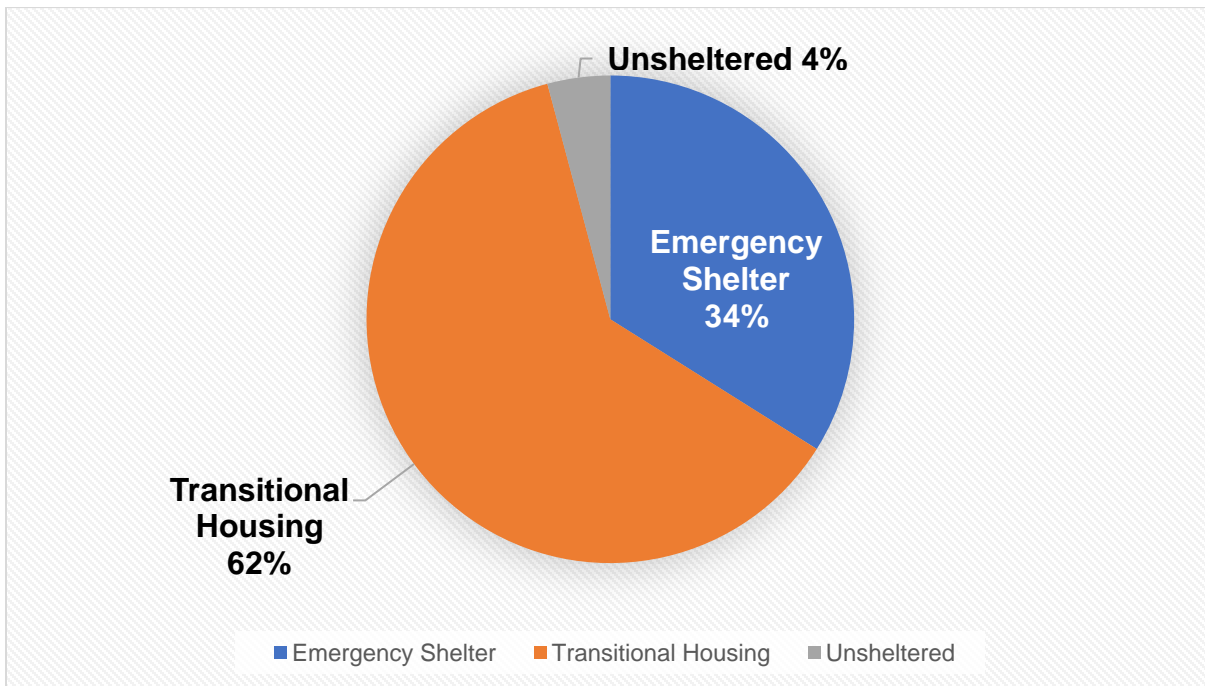
**CHART A: VERMONT POINT-IN-TIME COUNT OF THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS: 2014-2023**



BoS CoC = Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care (All VT counties EXCEPT for Chittenden)

CCHA CoC = Chittenden County Homeless Alliance Continuum of Care (ONLY Chittenden County)

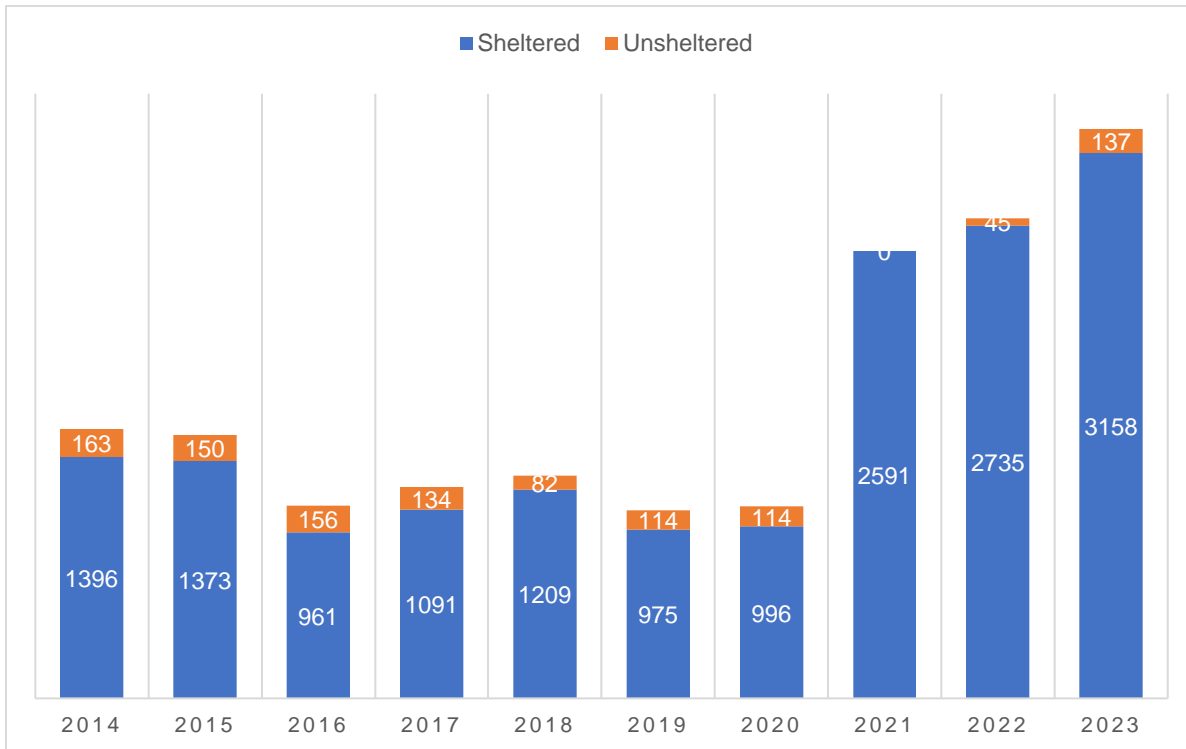
## CHART B: LOCATION OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the State of Vermont – with the support of multiple community partners – began offering non-congregate shelter for people experiencing homelessness in hotels and motels. Rooms were paid for using State general funds, FEMA funds, and subsequently federal Emergency Rental Assistance funding. With funding from the latter source, the Agency of Human Services created a temporary 9-month Transitional Housing program for the hotel residents which allowed for a month-to-month agreement between hotel owners and residents. This results in a significant increase in the number of homeless people counted as being in “Transitional Housing” in 2023. This increase in count for those in Transitional Housing also results in an artificial decrease in the number of people recorded as experiencing chronic homelessness, due to the HUD definition of chronic homelessness being limited to NOT include those in the Transitional Housing

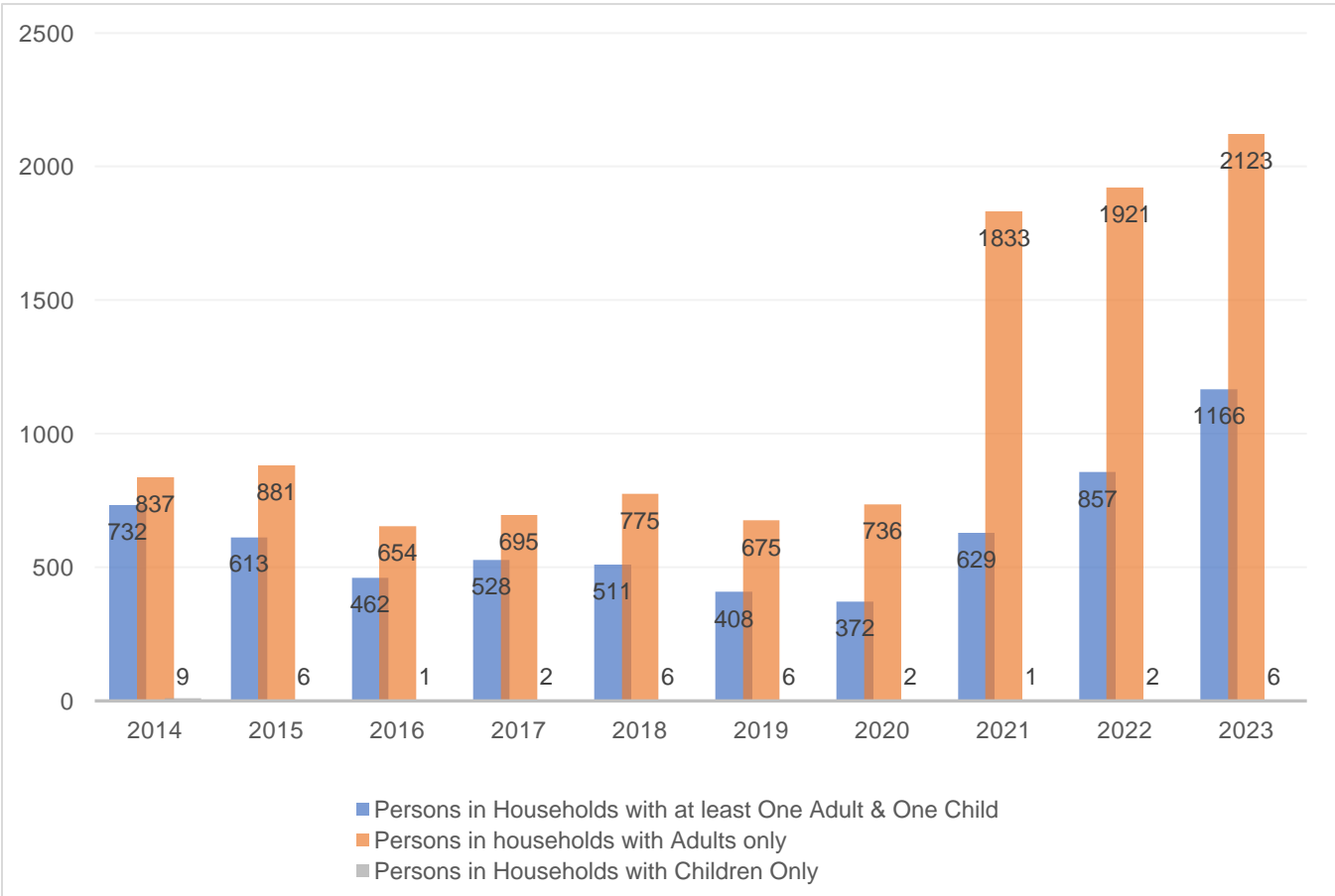


## CHART C: LOCATION OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS, SHELTERED AND UNSHELTERED



\*Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, No Unsheltered Count was conducted in 2021

## CHART D: PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE



## CHART E: 2022 POPULATION STATEWIDE BY RACE

Race	Homeless persons statewide	Vermont population*
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	2.52%	0.40%
Asian or Asian American	1.09%	1.80%
Black, African American, or African	8.07%	1.40%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.18%	0.00%
White	86.04%	89.80%
Some Other Race	0.00%	0.80%
Multiple Races	2.09%	5.80%
	100%	100.00%

\*Data United States Census Bureau, Census 2020

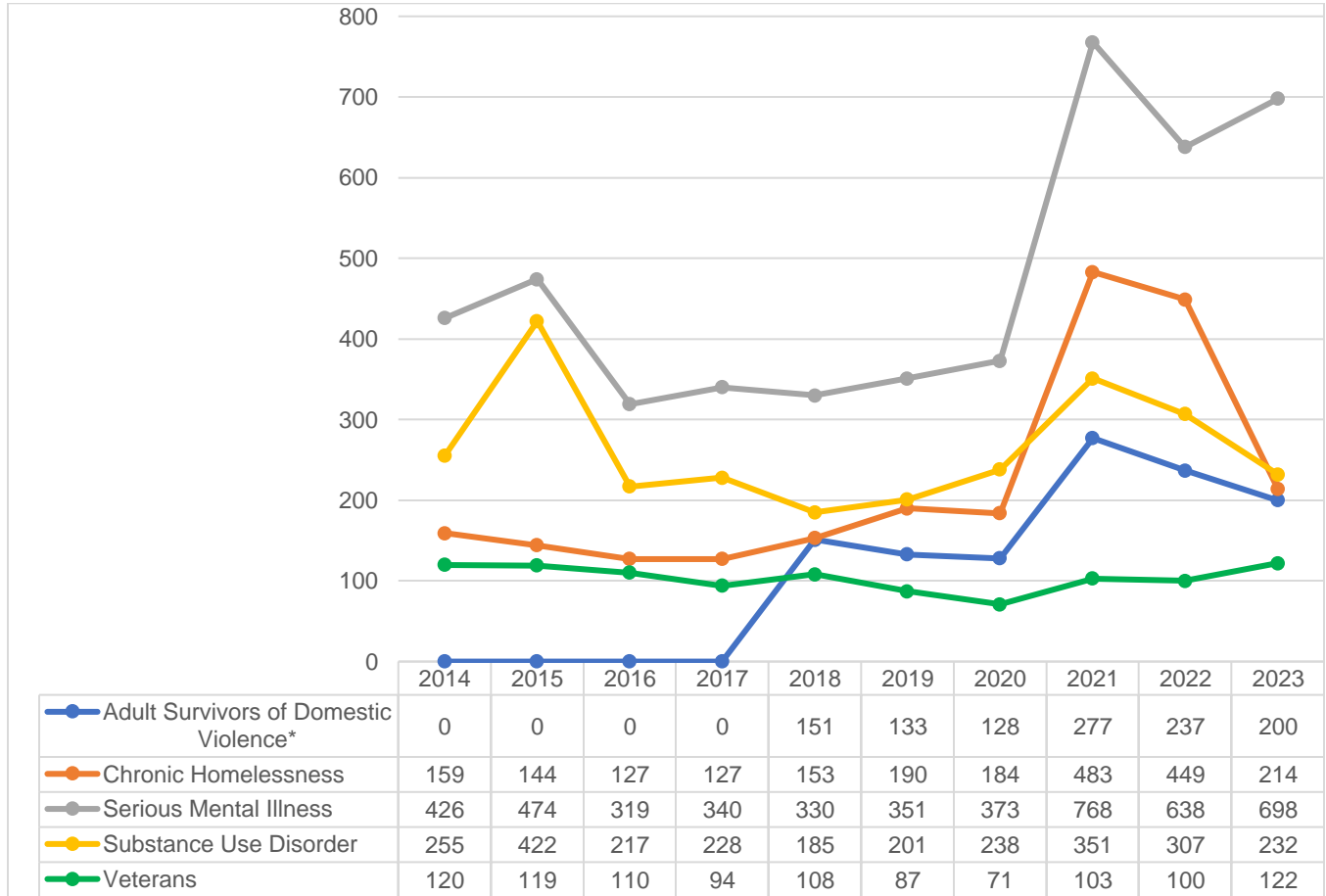
## CHART F: 2022 CHITTENDEN COUNTY BY RACE

Race	Homeless persons Chittenden	Chittenden population*
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	2.51%	0.23%
Asian or Asian American	2.11%	4.32%
Black, African American, or African	14.91%	2.93%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.26%	0.03%
White	75.73%	85.98%
Some Other Race	0.00%	0.92%
Multiple Races	4.49%	5.59%
	100.00%	100.00%

\*Data United States Census Bureau, Census 2020

## CHART G: STATEWIDE SUBPOPULATIONS OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

For the following data, people may be included under multiple subpopulation categories (i.e., they are not mutually exclusive categories). All data is based on self-reported information.



\*In 2018, the DV (Domestic Violence)/SV (Sexual Violence) question was changed to Currently Fleeing instead of a Survivor of DV/SV.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### **Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness and the Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care**

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### **Chittenden County Homeless Alliance and the Burlington/Chittenden Continuum of Care**

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### **Cover design**

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